

REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION OF PORTIONS OF SR 195, SR 27, SR 26 AND SR 271 WITHIN WHITMAN COUNTY AS A STATE SCENIC BYWAY

BRIEFING PAPER

Prepared for the
December 2002 Transportation Commission Meeting

Prepared by: Judy Lorenzo, Branch Manager, Rural Community Partnerships
Reviewed by: Kathleen Davis, Director, Highways and Local Programs
Approved by: Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this agenda item is to request the Commission request by the Palouse Country Scenic Byway Organization and communities in Whitman County to adopt a resolution to designate 160 miles of state highways as state designated scenic byways. The following routes are collectively referred to as the Palouse Country Scenic Byway: beginning in Pullman and traveling south on SR 195 through Colton and Uniontown to the Idaho border; and beginning in Pullman and traveling north on SR 27 to Palouse, Garfield Oakesdale and Tekoa; and beginning on SR 271 in Oakesdale and traveling north to Rosalia; and beginning on SR 195 in Rosalia and traveling south to Colfax and Pullman, and beginning on SR 26 in Colfax and traveling west on to Dusty and LaCrosse and ending where the Palouse River crosses the Whitman County line.

ACTION/OUTCOME:

The local byway communities are requesting that the Transportation Commission designate this collective group of routes as the Palouse Country Scenic Byway.

BACKGROUND:

This is the first request to designate a byway that contains more than one roadway. This “hub and spoke” system of scenic routes traverses the Palouse region of Whitman County. At the request of community activists in the Palouse Region and the state Department of Tourism and Business Development, staff from the Department have been working over the past year and half to explore the feasibility of marketing this system of routes as a single byway featuring many of the attractions and unique landscape formations that give the Palouse its sense of place.

During the summer of 2002, the byway committee made formal application to the Rural Community Economic Partnership Program. In August staff from WSDOT conducted a visual assessment of the route. In November of 2002 the Washington State Route Designation Panel concurred that a recommendation for designating the Palouse Country Scenic Byway should be forwarded to the Transportation Commission.

DISCUSSION:

Selected portions of the Summary & Recommendation Report and vicinity map for the Palouse Country Scenic Byway are attached.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the resolution.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Judy Lorenzo, Branch Manager, Rural Community Partnerships (360) 705-7274 Lorenzj@wsdot.wa.gov or Paula Connelley, Byway Specialist (360) 705-7895, connelp@wsdot.wa.gov



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

Washington State Department of Transportation
Heritage Corridors Program
PO Box 47393
Olympia, Washington 98504-7393

Summary & Recommendation Report:

Palouse Country Scenic Byway

Portions of: SR 195, SR 26, SR 27, and SR 271



*Reviewed by:
Washington State Route Designation Recommendation Panel
November 2002*

*Forwarded to the Washington State Transportation Commission
for Action December 2002*



Recommendation

Designate the following roadway segments as they comprise the proposed state scenic byway named the *Palouse Country Scenic Byway*. Beginning in Pullman and traveling south on SR 195 through Colton, and Uniontown to the Idaho border; and beginning in Pullman and traveling north on SR 27 to Palouse, Garfield, Oakesdale and Tekoa; and beginning at Oakesdale and traveling north on SR 271 to Rosalia; and beginning at Rosalia and traveling south on SR 195 through Steptoe, Colfax to Pullman, and beginning at Colfax and traveling west on SR 26 through Dusty, and La Crosse, and ending where the Palouse River crosses the Whitman County line.

Executive Summary

Palouse Scenic Byway Assessment

Background:

The Roadside & Site Development Unit and Rural Community Partnerships Office¹ staff performed a scenic byway assessment to determine the degree of the scenic views visible from the highways in the Palouse region. Preliminary data show that nearly 94 percent of the views from these state routes in the Palouse are rated "scenic" or higher.

Also included in this byway review is SR 272 from Palouse to Colfax and SR 194 from Pullman vicinity to Almota. These routes have previously been designated as state scenic byways, and the data verifies that their visual qualities are still intact.

TASKS

Staff from WSDOT's Rural Community Partnerships office and the byway organization have accomplished the following tasks and reached the following conclusions regarding the request for designation of the *Palouse Country Scenic Byway*:

- Staff has completed the data collection and analysis portion of the visual quality assessment, the traveler services verification, and the heritage resource evaluation.
- Staff has prepared a draft visual assessment discipline report, for review by the Recommendation Panel. The report's author has made a preliminary determination that the route's visual quality ratings warrant the route being designated a state scenic byway.
- Staff has verified that the route has a substantial number of scenic and heritage resources that support the telling of the byway story, and determined that the route has the potential to be marketed as a tourist destination.
- Staff has determined that the route has an adequate diversity, availability and distribution of traveler services.
- The Palouse Country Scenic Byway proponents have submitted their designation application.

¹ Effective 10/02 The Heritage Corridors Program has changed its name to the Rural Community Partnerships Office, a branch of the Community Economic Partnerships Program.

CONCLUSIONS

- The byway has demonstrated strong local support for designation by community members, elected officials, businesses and agencies.
- A strong community byway organization is functioning at this time.
- Byway proponents backed by broad community support are committed to developing a Corridor Management Plan.
- The Centennial Accord speaks to the importance that official acts by the Transportation Commission make in tribal matters. Therefore, tribal consultation and participation in the future activities of this scenic byway are important. Two recommendation panel members felt that a substantial increase in tribal involvement is feasible and necessary for this byway. One member felt that there is a need to reach out to the tribes in order to understand their unique perspective when shaping the corridor management plan. Although there are no reservation lands in Whitman County, the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Yakama, Colville, and Couer d'Alene tribes do have homelands. These tribes include descendents of the Palouse Indians who lived in the region. Another recommendation panel member noted that tribal involvement provided a good opportunity for education and appropriate interpretation from the native perspective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Recommendation Panel, WSDOT Community Economic Partnerships and Roadside & Site Development Unit staff has determined that the Palouse Country Scenic Byway meets all criteria for being designated a state scenic byway. They support a recommendation for designation with the understanding that the Palouse Country Scenic Byway leaders, recognizing the benefit to all parties, is committing to enhance to their efforts by including tribes as partners and members of the byway organization.



Map of Byway & Key Sites Narrative

The Final Application Package

The local byway organization has submitted a complete application package. This package contains four parts:

- Documentation describing the communities and the efforts of local volunteers involved in the byway organization
- Letters voicing strong local support from individuals, agencies, elected officials, and organizations located along the route
- A current inventory of traveler services available along the route
- Photos and descriptions of the key Heritage Resources and sites along the route that tell the story of the byway

The full application package is on file at the Rural Community Partnerships Office, and is available for review. The following pages are excerpted from the application package and were prepared by the local volunteers and WSDOT staff.



Local Support:

Letters of Support & Public Comments

The Community Economic Partnerships Office has conducted four public meetings in the Palouse region, had numerous phone and in person meetings with byway proponents and elected officials, and received the following listing of formal letters and resolutions of support: In addition, WSDOT has set up a site for on-line public comments on its web site. Public comment will be taken until December 18, 2002, or until the designation is considered by the Transportation Commission at its December meeting.

Resolutions of Support

City of Colfax
Town of Farmington
Town of Rosalia
City of Tekoa
Town of Uniontown
Whitman County Commissioners

Letters of Support

Senator Larry Sheahan
Dave Satterwhite
New Morning Glass
Palouse Chamber
Port of Whitman County
City of Pullman
Pullman Chamber
Pat's Books
Yosh Konishi
Mayor of Rosalia
Budding Rose Art Gallery
Tekoa Chamber
Tekoa Community Action
Center
Whitman County
Commissioners
Whitman County Parks
Department

Traveler Services Summary:

The majority of all types of services found along the Palouse Country Scenic Byway are located in Pullman and Colfax to a lesser degree. This reflects the rationale of the byway organization to emphasize Pullman as the supportive hub of the byway with spokes radiating to smaller communities with a lower degree of services of interest to travelers.

Staff has determined that it is reasonable for travelers to see all sites along the byway and access restaurants, accommodations, service stations, markets and other services they require, in a single day. Following is a distribution of available traveler services in byway communities:

Community Name	Restaurants	Accommodations	Service Stations/ Mini Marts	Markets
Pullman	49	8	8	2
LaCrosse	2	1	0	0
Dusty	1	0	0	0
Colfax	16	2	3	1
Colton	3	0	0	0
Uniontown	3	2	0	0
Palouse	1	0	1	1
Garfield	1	1	0	1
Oakesdale	2	0	1	1
Tekoa	1	1	1	1
Rosalia	2	0	1	1
Steptoe	1	1	1	0

Section **5**

Heritage Resources & Site Listings and Descriptions:

Are on file in the Rural Community Partnerships Office. – Contact Judy Lorenzo at (360) 705-7274 or Paula Connelley at (360) 705-7895.

